



96th Arizona Town Hall Tucson

Doubletree Hotel Tucson at Reid Park

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Remarks by Gov. Jan Brewer

Monday, April 26, 2010

Thank you very much.

Last November, you were gracious enough to give me an opportunity to speak to the 95th Arizona Town Hall -- meeting at the Grand Canyon.

It was there that I presented my flight plan for Arizona's future, preparing for our journey into the Second Century.

Well, we've traveled a long way since November, so allow me to give you a progress report -- and I'll let YOU decide just how we're doing.

But, first, let me recall the conditions we found when I took over as Governor.

We had to deal with the consequences of five high-rolling years before I took office, when the system grew government as large as possible.

I faced a state budget deficit of nearly five billion dollars across two fiscal years -- and a federal government whose unfunded mandates and sweetheart deals were stealing Arizona's freedom and threatening to bankrupt our state.

Government in Arizona spends 85 percent of the resources it receives supporting education, paying for health care and paying for public safety.

Unlike our Federal Government, we do not print money to support these core responsibilities.

Instead, we tax our citizens to support the common good: To create an educated society, to ensure an affordable level of health care and, most importantly, to secure public safety.

These are PRECISELY the same qualities that allow us to RETAIN companies and jobs – while we create an environment that’s friendlier to business – and develop a FOCUSED statewide business attraction and retention strategy.

We have now permanently reduced state spending by over two billion dollars and returned state government to a size it can afford – one that is stable, predictable, and reliable.

We’ve streamlined agencies, shrinking the State work force by over ten percent.

And, I’ve implemented a FIVE-POINT plan that is bringing jobs to Arizona.

A necessary part of Arizona's advancement in the global economy is sustaining and further developing high-skilled, high value jobs – such as those created in our base Industries through exports and foreign direct investment.

Companies recognize the value of operating a business in Arizona, and our strategies are helping us RETAIN those businesses – and also helping us win NEW business and projects – especially when we’re up against big check-writers -- like Texas.

So, let me tell you what I’ve done:

FIRST, I launched a Jobs Action Team – Commerce -- State Land -- the Departments of Environmental Quality and Revenue – are all working together to cut through red tape – and green tape -- and speed what has been a slow government process. We can’t afford to have jobs languish — or worse, perish — because they got caught up in an endless permitting pipeline.

SECOND, we are re-thinking areas of our tax structure that unduly burden our employers, particularly those who require large capital investments, such as manufacturing.

THIRD, I worked with Arizona’s top CEOs on my Governor’s Commerce Advisory Council to create a new statewide economic development delivery structure to advance Arizona’s global competitiveness.

It will provide the leadership that has been lacking.

My Commerce Director Don Cardon is now leading the transition.

He is focused on an economic advancement strategy for the state -- his experience as both an economic developer and successful businessman aligns with my vision for a more successful Arizona that can better compete in the global market to win leading companies and new jobs for Arizonans.

This new quasi-public state authority will be long-lasting, impactful and laser-focused to grow Arizona businesses and attract new companies to our state.

It will be governed by a Board of Directors, with the Governor serving as its Chair.

This new authority is designed to focus on Arizona's high-value industries -- renewable energy/solar, advanced manufacturing, technology, bioscience, and others -- in order to diversify the State economy for the long-term.

We will now have a comprehensive approach -- one for the 21st Century -- one yielding Focused Priorities -- Focused Investment -- and Focused Efforts.

Don Cardon continues as a guiding light in this reform, and he remains a vital asset to ensuring we fulfill this mission.

Let me mention here that Arizona is making great strides -- especially in its approach to renewable energy -- such as solar.

Last summer, I signed legislation creating the renewable energy tax incentive program. Companies are interested -- and they are coming to Arizona.

-- Suntech Power Holdings.

-- Tower Automotive.

-- Bell Independent Power will build a five mega-watt solar plant at the University of Arizona Tech Park -- including a first of its kind thermal storage system.

These are all part of Arizona's growing solar landscape. We are on our way to becoming a solar capitol of the world.

FOURTH, we are investing in our PEOPLE to make sure they have the skills to compete in these new jobs.

Through my Governor's Job Training Assistance Fund, I am committing ten million dollars of my discretionary funding -- through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 -- to establish a Job Training Assistance Program.

When we get a company landed here, we get them up and operating quicker, creating jobs sooner by making sure our people are prepared with the latest skills to go to work for them.

And, the FIFTH and final point, is that I am restoring fiscal stability, starting with balancing the state budget and resolving the deficit while protecting education and public safety.

The Arizona Comeback began in earnest when I fought for – and won -- thanks to the help of courageous members of both parties in the State Senate and the State House – the right of the VOTERS to decide whether to raise the state sales tax by 1 percent over the next three years.

I've NEVER voted to raise taxes in my entire career.

Not once in 28 years in public service. Not one time!

But, I've learned one thing above all else: Doing the RIGHT thing, almost always means doing the HARD thing.

That's how I feel about Proposition 100. As hard as it is to do, I will be a "YES" vote come Election Day, May 18th.

I'm voting "YES" because it's the right thing to do, and I strongly encourage you to vote "YES" as well.

IF we are to preserve the core functions of the Arizona we all love ...

-- IF we want to keep funding Arizona's K-12 education system at reasonable levels to keep class sizes manageable so teachers have time to spend with students to help them learn ...

– IF we want to help our universities and community colleges – facing tuition increases of 15, 18, and 20 percent ...

– IF we want to keep felons locked up ...

-- and IF we want to aid Arizona's poorest families with the help they desperately need ... then Proposition 100 MUST pass on May 18th!

Without the revenue that a "YES" vote will bring, we will need to cut yet another billion dollars.

Without it, education funding -- already at 2006 levels -- will be set back by at least 10 years and hundreds of millions of dollars.

I emphasize, this is a TEMPORARY tax.

It will start on June 1st of this year, and come to a DEAD STOP at the end of the day on May 31, 2013 -- when it is automatically repealed from the law books.

This is not a cure-all, but the tax will get us through until revenues recover, so that education and public safety do not bear the brunt of the downturn.

To those who stand in opposition to this tax – those who claim their opposition is based on conservative principles, let me remind you that when Ronald Reagan was elected Governor of California in 1966, he discovered the California budget had been built on a house of cards -- a Ponzi scheme -- designed to let politicians take credit for spending NOW and forcing OTHERS to worry about the consequences LATER. Vast amounts of debt and accounting gimmicks -- coupled with a huge expansion in permanent spending and government programs -- had left California and its new Governor with a financial crisis -- and a state budget near collapse.

Sound familiar?

No one can challenge the conservative credentials of perhaps one of the greatest presidents of the 20th Century.

This great man, of great faith, was a true conservative.

Yet, he confronted the insurmountable state budget crisis by proposing and ratifying a tax increase.

Ronald Reagan had a good, conservative plan.

And, so do I.

We've attracted well over one billion dollars in capital – twenty-five new companies or expansion projects -- yielding quality growth with more than twenty-four-hundred jobs. So, you tell me, are we now headed in the right direction?

You bet we are.

And, we've done much more:

-- "Operation Clean Sweep" has inmates picking up trash along our highways.

-- Our ArizonaSERVES Task Force is coordinating statewide volunteer efforts with faith-based and community organizations assisting those in need in our communities.

-- My Commission on Privatization and Efficiency is identifying state services and agencies whose functions can be eliminated, consolidated, streamlined or outsourced to achieve greater operational efficiency in meeting the needs of our citizens.

-- Transportation projects are moving forward because we were efficient and diligent with more than five hundred and twenty million dollars in federal stimulus dollars obligated wisely.

-- With regard to border security, I am not taking "No," for an answer from the federal government. Arizona roads and open spaces have become thoroughfares for illegal alien traffic and smuggling operations — drugs, arms and humans.

I will NOT accept the notion that border security is a responsibility of the Border States.

– So, we're now transferring back to the Federal Government non-violent criminal aliens housed in the Department of Corrections, saving Arizona taxpayers thousands of dollars.

-- Recently, I announced that on behalf of the State of Arizona, I was joining fifteen other states who have filed a lawsuit in federal court challenging the constitutionality of the Health Care legislation.

-- At my request, the Arizona Legislature passed a law in special session permitting me to initiate a legal proceeding or appear on behalf of the State to challenge Congress's unconstitutional action.

With its onerous federal mandate, Congress has exceeded its authority and left Arizona no option but to challenge its unconstitutional act in federal court.

Health Care regulation is a power reserved to the STATES by the 10th Amendment.

Congress has OVERREACHED by REQUIRING individuals to purchase health insurance -- and penalizing them if they don't. And the total costs of their mandates will require Arizona to spend some \$12 Billion dollars over the next ten years---more than double the size of today's General Fund to pay for their programs.

We MUST join this suit to ensure Arizona has a voice in the legal proceedings. This is just too important for our State to sit back and do nothing.

We're doing all that ... and more.

Now, I'm not aiming to please everyone.

I am aiming to lead this Arizona Comeback – to win the future for our children and grandchildren.

I am restoring Arizona – committed to its comeback -- based on our common values, cultivated in the soil of self-sacrifice.

Abraham Lincoln said, (Quote) “The struggle of today is not altogether FOR today; it is for a vast FUTURE also. With a reliance on Providence, all the more firm and earnest, let us proceed in the great task which events have placed upon us.” (Unquote)

So, let us proceed in the great task of making Arizona our STRONG AND SHINING HOME.

Thank you.

God bless you and your families, and may God bless this great state of Arizona.